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United States Senate

WASHINGTON, DC 20510-1702

October 28, 1991

Richard G. Darman.
Director, Office of Management and Budget
Executive Office Building
Washington, DC 20503

Dear Dick:

Recently, the U. S. Department of Health and Human Services launched the American Stop Smoking Intervention Study for cancer prevention (ASSIST). Secretary Sullivan called it "the largest-ever national tobacco control program." While I have never objected to efforts to reduce smoking, particularly among our nation's youth, I must question the justification for this particular program.

Based on this Department's own statistics, virtually every American knows of the supposed health risks associated with smoking. Why then does the Secretary propose spending \$135 million to fund state and local activists to lobby against smoking. I just do not understand why we should funnel precious federal dollars to state agencies which will be allowed to hand millions of dollars to state and local anti-tobacco coalitions over the next seven years.

ASSIST appears to be nothing more than an expensive duplication of current programs. Nothing proves this point more than a statement by a spokesman of the National Cancer Institute admitting that "from more than 60 large intervention studies, we have learned which strategies and approaches are most effective in controlling tobacco use." Do we really need another study on a subject where the entire public is considered universally aware?

It is hard to reconcile the duplicative and expensive purpose of this program. Another case in point, is the October 4 press release announcing the ASSIST program. Money for Phase I will identify high-risk smoking population groups in each state. A detailed breakdown of the high risk smoking population groups follows on the very next page of the release.

One last important point based on the American Cancer Society's annual report. Only one-fourth of their annual income is spent on research. Therefore, I believe the \$135 million in this program could be used in a much more prudent manner such as true medical research or deficit reduction. Any attention which you could provide to this matter would be most appreciated and I look forward to hearing from you.

Sincerely,



MITCH MCCONNELL
UNITED STATES SENATOR

MM: jh

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